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SUBJECT: CONDEMNING ARREST AND ARRAIGNMENT OF SYRIAN  
DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

REF: SECSTATE 11025

¶1. The following statement was issued by the EU Presidency  
on February 4, the same day as reftel.

¶2. Begin text:

Recalling the Presidency Statement of 27 September 2007 and  
the Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European  
Union of 31 December 2007, the European Union condemns the  
arrest on 28 January 2008 of Mr Riyad Seif, the prominent  
member of the democratic opposition and former Member of the  
Syrian Parliament.

The European Union's serious concern relates also to the  
detention of eleven other signatories of the quoted  
Declaration, namely Mr Ahmed Tomeh, Mr Jaber El Choufi, Mr  
Akram El Bounni, Mr Walid El Bounni, Mr Mohammed Yasser El  
Aiti, Mrs Fida Hourani, Mr Ali Abdallah, Mr Fayez Sara, Mr  
Mohammed Hajji Darwish, Mr Marwan El Eich, Mr Talal Abu Dan,  
as well as all other prisoners of conscience and political  
prisoners.

The European Union calls for the immediate release of Mr  
Riyad Seif and the other eleven prisoners, who peacefully  
expressed their opinions and called for democratic reforms in  
Syria. Fearing for their safety and physical integrity,  
especially because of the serious health condition of Mr  
Riyad Seif and some other detainees, the European Union urges  
the Syrian authorities to respect international laws and  
standards and to assure to all detainees the appropriate  
conditions of detention and suitable medical treatment.

The European Union calls on the Syrian Government to  
reconsider all cases of political prisoners and prisoners of  
conscience in accordance with its national Constitution and  
international commitments, specifically the Universal  
Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on  
Civil and Political Rights, which Syria has signed and  
ratified in 1969 and that clearly states the right to freedom  
of expression, the right to freedom of assembly and  
the right to be treated with humanity and respect when  
deprived of liberty. In this sense the European Union invites  
Syrian authorities to re-establish dialogue with Syrian civil  
society.

The Candidate Countries, Croatia and the former Yugoslav  
Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and  
Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia  
and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries,  
Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic  
Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia  
align themselves with this declaration. End Text.

MURRAY

